

## Reference

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### New birds from Kenya's northern border area

During recent visits to the Lokichoggio area of northwestern Kenya (DAT and MACC, 11–14 August 1990), and to Kiwayu, Kiunga area, northern Kenya coast (DAT, 22–24 September 1990), the following birds were recorded for the country for the first time.

#### *Mirafraga hypermetra kidepoensis* Red-winged Bush Lark

On 14 August 1990 two birds, approximately 20–25 m apart, were observed calling from the tops of small bushes in an area of bushed grassland (altitude 500 m) some 15 km northwest of Lokichoggio towards the Kenya–Sudan border. It was clear that both birds were Red-winged Bush Larks *M. hypermetra*; the calls of both were single short, drawn out whistles, repeated every 5–6 s. Both birds appeared to be smaller than nominate *M. hypermetra* from eastern Kenya, while a buffy supercilium and the diagnostic all-rufous wings as seen in flight, were the most prominent features of both birds.

Britton (1980) states that the nominate race is locally common in bushed grasslands of the eastern plateau below 1350 m, with the smaller *kidepoensis* occurring in northeastern Uganda from Kidepo National Park to Mt Moroto. In Sudan, Cave & Macdonald (1955) show the range of *kidepoensis* as restricted to extreme southeastern areas.

This record represents a small, but not totally unexpected extension of range, and is the first record of the race *kidepoensis* from Kenya.

#### *Cisticola ruficeps* Red-pate Cisticola

On 13 August 1990, some 15 km northeast of Lokichoggio, while watching a mixed bird party comprising several Red-fronted Warblers *Spiloptila rufifrons*, White-bellied Canaries *Serinus dorsostriatus* and a single Purple Grenadier *Uraeginthus ianthinogaster*, we noticed that there were two small, chestnut headed cisticolas with them. We were able to observe the birds at close range for 15–20 min, and also relocate them with apparently the same mixed bird party early the following morning.

Both cisticolas had identical plumage, and were presumed to be a pair. The dull chestnut head and nape contrasted sharply with the warm brown upperparts, and traces of some mottling on the mantle, and buffy edgings to the primaries and wing coverts were noticed. Chin and throat were clear creamy-white shading to buffy-white on the rest of the underparts, while the tail was plain brown with broad buffy-white edgings to the outer feathers. Size was similar to that of the Tiny Cisticola *Cisticola nana*.

The plain brown upperparts identified these birds as belonging to the *mongalla* race of *C. ruficeps*, which Chappuis (1974) treated as a distinct species on account of its different voice. Unfortunately both birds were silent throughout the periods we had them under observation, and for the time being we prefer to consider *mongalla* as a race of *ruficeps*.

Britton (1980) refers to *C. ruficeps* as a bird of bushed and wooded grasslands, forming a superspecies with *C. nana*, with a few East African records of *mongalla* from north-eastern Uganda. As with the previous species, our observations represent a small but not unexpected extension of range, and the first record of *Cisticola ruficeps* from Kenya.

#### *Anaplectes melanotis jubaensis* Red-headed Weaver

On 23 September 1990 DAT noticed a group of Red-headed Weavers building nests in a baobab tree some 10 km north of Kiwayu village on the Kenya coast north of Lamu. Nine males and two females were watched for 10–15 min. The most striking feature of the colony was that all the males were bright crimson in colour, showing none of the plumage characteristics of the black-faced race *leuconotus* which occurs over much of East Africa. It was clear that they were of the race *jubaensis*, a form described by van Someren (1920) and named Crimson Weaver *Anaplectes jubaensis*, through later treated as a race of *A. melanotis* by Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1955).

Ash & Miskell (1983) refer to *jubaensis* as an uncommon resident in Somalia, occurring along the Jubba River and in southern forests south of 3°N. Hall & Moreau (1970) do not distinguish *jubaensis* and Britton (1980) does not mention this race for Kenya. This is surprising, since White (1963) gives the range of this form as "South Somalia in the Juba River area and adjacent north-east Kenya." Whether Britton (1980) simply overlooked White's record or rejected it on unstated grounds, is not known. Nevertheless, the present observation serves to admit this distinctive race to the Kenya avifauna.

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